

The Adventure Zone: Graduation – Ep. 10, Dark Arts and Crafts

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Gary: It's me, Gary the Gargoyle! Let's see, what's been goin' on?

[theme music plays]

Gary: Uh, the Thundermen – Fitzroy Maplecourt, Argo Keene, and the Firbolg – are students at Hieronymous Wigenstaff's School for Heroism and Villainy. They all started as sidekicks and hench people, but recently, Fitzroy got bumped up to the villain track with Argo and Furby as his sidekicks.

Fitzroy was a student at Clyde Nite's Night Knight School, but one day, out of nowhere, he developed some bonkers kind of magic and got booted out. Also, Argo recently joined a secret society called The Unbroken Chain. That seems like a pretty big deal, huh?

Let's see, what else? Oh yeah! The Firbolg has been acting strange, and he doesn't seem to know why. Before the fellows went off fighting imps, he dreamt about Leon talking to Hieronymous' younger brother, Higglemas Wigenstaff, about contacting the Heroic Oversight Guild, and then Leon disappeared.

[music stops]

Gary: Oh, whoops! The music's over! Enjoy the episode!

[theme music plays]

Griffin: Uh, are there gonna be any skeletons in this one?

Travis: I don't know Griffin, why?

Griffin: I just need to know up top. 'Cause like, we're starting a new chapter, it feels like, and I just need to know... I need to prepare myself. Last time that you dropped skeletons on us, like, you didn't warn us that

there were gonna be skeletons, and so, when they showed up, Trav, I got piss-pants scared, so...

Justin: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: Just trying to get—

Justin: Well, actually, I'm glad Griffin raises this point.

Travis: Okay.

Justin: I'd really like to know if there are gonna be skeletons in it.

Travis: There are skeletons that work at the school.

Griffin: Yeah, those are the skele—those are the offending skeletons. If you could just tell us next time that they're gonna be there...

Travis: I'm not gonna tell you which episodes they're gonna be in, or even what rooms they're gonna be in, but just know, like... brace yourself all the time.

Justin: When I worked at Blockbuster, several decades ago, a woman came to me with the DVD copy of – or, perhaps VHS copy of the movie Hush, starring Blythe Danner and Gwyneth Paltrow. And uh, she said, "Excuse me, umm... do you know if this movie has a supernatural ending?"

Travis: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] I always laugh—I always appreciated that. She didn't want to take that journey. If that's where she's going...

Travis: "I don't believe in that stuff."

Justin: Hoodoo and witchcraft? No thank you.

Travis: No.

[music plays]

Travis: So, a new semester has begun, and with it, you have moved into new quarters on the opposite side of campus, in the hero and villains dorms. There are two bedrooms, both about ten feet by ten feet. Fitz's room contains one bed, a bureau, a fireplace, and a chest at the foot of the bed. Argo and Furby's room has two beds, two chests, and a much simpler fireplace.

The main chamber has a sitting area and a small dining area, and in this collective chamber, there's a private restroom.

Griffin: Oh! God—wait, what were we working with before?

Travis: It was like a communal bathroom situation.

Griffin: Ohh!! With my butt, where everyone else's butts is?!

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: That's not good. I've gone... as soon as we get in here, I use the bathroom for the first time in six months.

Clint: [laughs]

Griffin: And it is...

Justin: It is terrible to behold.

Griffin: It is terrible to be hold.

Clint: That is really—that's really keepin' in the Griffin McElroy brand, too.

Griffin: Yes, that's true. Actually, y'know what? I change it. I went to the bathroom once during this campaign, and it was at that shithead lawyer's office. And I went—I did—I blew it up, and then I did it in our room. So that's two now.

Travis: There are windows in both bedrooms, and your dorm overlooks the battlegrounds. And there's a Gary in this room, as well.

Gary: Ayy, it's me, Gary!

Argo: Garyyy!

Fitzroy: Garyyy!

Justin: Gary...

Gary: Hello!

Fitzroy: Gary, just—with the current set up, Gary, as it stands, you are no longer able to watch us sleep at night. And I'm just wondering if we have deprived you of some sort of perverse...

Gary: No, I can still see you!

Travis: And the way that it's situated is, Gary is at the intersection of the three rooms. And so, there's basically like a corner cut out of all three rooms so that Gary is accessible from whichever room you're in.

Fitzroy: Excellent. I take it back. Your creepy panopticon continues to function.

Gary: Yes! And it's me, the same Gary that was in your room before! They moved me over! This is an upgrade for all of us! What a nice room.

Fitzroy: Uh... it doesn't matter to me which Gary we have.

Gary: The same Gary!

Fitzroy: Great.

Gary: I also just want to say, isn't it weird that such a nice room was open in the middle of the semester? You notice that? Weeeird, huh?

Fitzroy: Are you... are you trying to hint—

Gary: Sittin' empty?

Fitzroy: Yeah, what—where did it come from, Gary?

Gary: It's haunteeed!

Justin: It's not haunted.

Gary: It is haunted! Ayy, bwoooo!

Clint: Argo is looking around very carefully to see if the cat has followed them to this room.

Gary: Not yet!

Travis: No, you did—when you woke up this morning, the cat was nuzzling against you again.

Clint: Aaagh!

Travis: The cat came back.

Fitzroy: Gary, you need to tell me right now if you're BS'ing us about this—about the ghost or ghoul that haunts this... this—

Gary: I've heard that it's haunted!

Fitzroy: From who, Gary? From who?

Gary: From the hive mind that is Gary.

Fitzroy: But hive mind Gary had to hear it from someone else, or else it's a hive mind Gary folktale.

Gary: Well one Gary told another Gary... you know how it goes.

Fitzroy: Okay, so you're making it up.

Gary: I heard it was haaaunteeed! Ooooh!

Fitzroy: Uhh... master Firbolg, you seem fairly attuned to the elements. Do you pick up on any sort of spiritual, um, dwelling here?

Firbolg: Umm... I will need several hours to ascertain.

Fitzroy: Oh. I was just joking. Can you actually do that?

Firbolg: Shh. Please, silence.

Justin: I'll detect magic. [laughs]

Travis: Okay. Uh, there is definitely some like, spectral traces and leavings.

Justin: You know you can't lie. *You* can't lie. You know that, right?

Travis: Yeah, but what am I supposed to do? There's ghost magic everywhere? There's definitely some ghost traces. There's a cold spot, and the clocks don't work, and, uh, you see, I don't know, a small child at the top of some steps or whatever the fuck. The room is haunted.

Justin: We have steps in our room?

Travis: No.

Justin: So they're ghost steps, too?

Travis: They're steps of the mind, Justin.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: This is exhausting.

Travis: So what do you guys think of your new room?

Fitzroy: Well, Gar, I liked it a lot better three fucking minutes ago. And that's right, I cuss now. Did you hear that, Gary?

Gary: Whoa! That was a good one!

Fitzroy: Yeah, thanks.

Gary: Those imps taught you something, eh?

Fitzroy: Yeah, those imps taught me a lot about life and love.

Gary: ... Oh?

Fitzroy: Yeah. We don't have to get into it, but...

Gary: Did you make a new friend?

Fitzroy: That's one way of puttin' it.

Gary: Okay.

Fitzroy: I'm just kidding.

Gary: Did you smooch an imp?

Fitzroy: You don't need to put it in such a crass term, Gary.

Gary: Did you make love to an imp?

Clint: [laughs]

Fitzroy: Garyyy!

Justin: That's better.

Fitzroy: No. So um... what uh, do we get access to like, y'know, an in-room dining service now? And—

Gary: Nope, same dining hall for everybody! But... Fiiitz, I heard a little rumor that I think you'll be excited about... better go check it out!

Fitzroy: Gary, I swear to god, if there is a crepe corner, and—

Gary: Ahh!

Fitzroy: Gary!

Gary: Ahhh!

Fitzroy: Do not mess with me, Gary! Are you kidding me right now?!

Gary: Ohh! Ahh!

Griffin: I bolt out of the room.

Justin: I'll follow.

Travis: When you arrive at the dining chamber, indeed, you do see a brand new... crepe station!!

Griffin: I charge it. If someone's in my way, or currently using it, I'm going to roll to attack them.

Travis: No one is in your way.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: You needn't attack.

Justin: Uh, I hope it's the crepe station five. I hear that the crepes load pretty much instantly.

Griffin: [laughs]

Travis: It's a crepe station six.

Justin: Crepe station six?! Oh, holy shit!

Griffin: Damn, we done skipped one!

Justin: Those are supposed to be illegal!

Travis: Yeah, it can do savory or sweet.

Justin: No!

Travis: Yeah.

Justin: The forbidden crepe!

Travis: And y'know what? You heard a rumor that if you pick the right settings, it could do *savory and* sweet.

Justin: This calls for it. [opens a soda can]

Griffin: I—oh, yeah, baby!

Travis: Ohh yeah, grip it!

Griffin: Rippin' it up. I think that I'm trying to make that savory sweet crepe, just like, instant. I think I'm in a trance.

Travis: Uh-huh. Uh, roll, uhh... just give me a straight up, uh, let's say wisdom roll.

Griffin: Oh, well that's... uhh, 11!

Travis: Y'know what? Is making crepes wisdom or intelligence? Have you read about making crepes, or do you just feel it in your bones?

Griffin: Travis, Fitzroy... Sir Fitzroy Maplecourt has eight intelligence points. So...

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: I don't think he—I don't think he's a—

Travis: Maybe it's dexterity. Maybe making crepes isn't easy?

Griffin: Okay, well then, it's a 13. But it's a flat 11 is what I got, so...

Travis: That is an edible crepe.

Griffin: Okay.

Justin: He did it. He made the—he made the sweet savory crepe, and just like that, two food trucks explode.

Travis: [laughs] Somewhere.

Justin: He's done it.

Griffin: [laughs] Oh boy.

Travis: Um, so, you—after getting yourself a crepe, and everyone else getting their food, you see Buckminster Eden sitting by himself, and he catches your eye and invites you to sit with him.

Justin: This is for the audience's benefit. Like, we're—we—y'know, sometimes it takes a little—we have a lot of characters in this world. We're returning to them after sometime away. Remind us, who's Buckminster?

Travis: Buckminster is another student, the one you met on the first day, who gave you the tour of Hieronymous Wigenstaff's campus. Uh, he is also one of your main friends here. I'd say your two main friends here on campus are Rainer and Buckminster. Rainer's a villain, Buckminster is a hero. Uh, and he has since, uh, I think for lack of a better word, lost Leon.

But after the last episode, he seems okay with that, as determined by, uh, you, Fitz. There was some kind of, uh, enchantment magic that perhaps was messing with his memory. And now, he is gesturing for you to come join him at the table. And he looks happy to see you.

Griffin: Uh, by the way, I've been thinking about this, and... I do not think I told the other two.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Griffin: About what I saw there. Like, I think—I do not think I would tell them about that.

Travis: Okay, great.

Griffin: So have a seat! [laughs]

Clint: Argo spears a couple of kumquats, and uh, goes and plops his shiny heinie next to Buckminster. Sits at the table. Give him a—

Travis: Dad, can I ask you a question?

Clint: Yes.

Travis: Do you have any idea – and this is not a trick question, but – do you have any idea what a kumquat tastes like? Or do you just think it's a funny word?

Clint: No, we used to have a kumquat tree when I lived in Daytona Beach.

Travis: `Cause I'm trying to picture one, and I can't even picture the ding dang thing.

Clint: They're also known as Japanese plum.

Travis: Oh, okay. Now I—oh, yeah. If you had said that... okay.

Clint: Oh, I knew I put it wrong.

Travis: Yeah. So you sit next to Buckminster, and he goes...

Buckminster: Ah, welcome friends! Yes, um... tell me, Argo. I've already heard about it from Fitz, but tell me about your imp, uh, experience! I heard that it was quite thrilling. Death-defying, in fact!

Argo: Umm... well, I did, uh... thanks to my new hero, Fitz, I—I escaped from the brink of death. I missed a lot, because I was at zero—no, I was unconscious.

Buckminster: Oh, your blood was out, I think is what that means.

Griffin: [laughs]

Argo: Yes. Uh...

Buckminster: You were out of the stuff.

Argo: By god, the little guy came along and brought me back to life, and I owe him a life debt.

Buckminster: Oh!

Fitzroy: Uh, yes, and a lot of times, when people say that, they do mean it sort of... um... metaphorically. At this school, there is actually a sort of fungible like, equivalent to a life debt. And we can get into that later.

Buckminster: And what about you, Furby? Did you have fun squishin' `em? Squishin' them imps?

Firbolg: It was... mm. Unfortunate.

Buckminster: Okay.

Firbolg: They... some seem nice. Others seem... mean.

Buckminster: Mm-hmm.

Firbolg: No time to tell the difference.

Buckminster: Oh wow, you really brought it down. Um, made it sound like a whole kind of war epic thing. I—I—okay.

Firbolg: This is not the first time I have soiled the mood. It is a great shame.

Buckminster: No, it's okay. I asked. It's fine. I mostly just, y'know, hung out—

Firbolg: I will tell joke.

Fitzroy: Oh! Yes. Yes yes yes yes yes.

Argo: [laughs] Go for it!

Firbolg: Step back.

Travis: They all scoot away a little bit.

Firbolg: How many seeds... does it take to grow the mighty birch?

Buckminster: How many?

Fitzroy: Uh, yes, how many.

Argo: No, wait, we need to try to guess, don't we?

Buckminster: No, it's not a riddle, it's a joke.

Fitzroy: No, it's not a riddle. It's not a quiz. It's a joke.

Argo: Oh, gotcha. We don't know!

Firbolg: One seed.

Buckminster: ... Okay!

Argo: Wow, that's some real Steven Wright shit, there.

Firbolg: This, we call a thinker.

Griffin: [laughs]

Firbolg: It's a creeper joke.

Buckminster: Okay.

Firbolg: Here in a few hours, you will sit in silent contemplation of your mortality, and start a very thick chuckle. Disruptive to your colleagues.

Fitzroy: Uh, boy, lookin' forward to that, uh, Furby.

Firbolg: One seed.

Fitzroy: [holding back laughter] Mm-hmm.

Buckminster: Okay. Uh, Fitzroy, I wanted to say, that is a lovely new brooch.

Fitzroy: Yes, thank you. A magic bird flew down and gave it to me like in a fairy tale, so...

Buckminster: Oh!

Fitzroy: Yes.

Buckminster: It seems so familiar to me.

Fitzroy: Uh, I mean, is it—did a hawk famously steal some of your accessories?

Buckminster: Oh no, it just—it reminds me of one I gave to Leon.

Fitzroy: Oh.

Buckminster: Uh, for his birthday last year.

Fitzroy: Oh, that's funny and weird. Because Leon's okay. Right?

Buckminster: Yes. Yes, of course. He's traveling.

Fitzroy: Yes. I will—

Firbolg: Where has he gone?

Buckminster: Umm...

Travis: And you see him kind of thinking really hard, and suddenly, he looks kind of confused. And then his face relaxes again and goes...

Buckminster: Oh, just traveling, y'know, here and there.

Justin: Uh, I'm going to roll, uh, on this. I'm gonna roll... was it insight?

Travis: Yes.

Justin: Uh, 17 plus four. 21.

Travis: Um, much like what you saw, Fitz, uh, Firbolg, you see that his eyes kind of glaze over a little bit as he says it. They become slightly unfocused, and you can see that, from his facial expressions, he believes what he is saying. But he is not actually referencing any kind of like, concrete memory as he says it. It is like he is delivering, uh, a monolog almost. Delivering lines.

Griffin: I would love to try and get ahead of what I assume is going to come next from our Firbolg friend, who is extremely literal in a lot of the things that he does, and try and... maybe this is a sleight of hand roll or something like that, just to kind of like, try and make eye contact with him and like, shake my head like, 'no' a little bit, to not like, press the question. 'Cause I am worried about what happens if that happens.

Travis: Yeah. I'll call that a sleight of hand. I mean, not literally, mind you. But yeah.

Griffin: I think my—I've been thinking about like, where Fitz is at after that, and I think his like, paranoia is maximum. And so, he doesn't want to like, alert people. Uh, that's a 17 plus two. 19.

Travis: Yeah. So uh, I will... it will be up to you, Firbolg, how you respond to this, but you do, very clearly, without catching Buckminster's attention, Fitzroy makes kind of eye contact with you, and you can tell just like a slight shake of the head, and his eyes go kind of very pointedly, uh, at you.

Firbolg: Hm. Ah, well, I wish him safe passage.

Buckminster: Oh yes, thank—I'm sure he's fine! Nothing to worry about!

Travis: Uh, and Rainer makes her way over from getting breakfast, and says...

Rainer: Oh, I'm so happy to see all of you! How was your break?

Fitzroy: Imp... it was... imp-ossibly fu—impossibly fun.

Rainer: Oh, cool! I went and saw my dad.

Fitzroy: It was—hold on, wait, can I try again?

Rainer: Oh.

Fitzroy: It was—it was s-implify delightful.

Rainer: Are you okay? Are you... having a stroke?

Fitzroy: Uh, no. We did an imp thing.

Rainer: Oh!

Argo: And it's kind of imp-udent for you to ask him.

Rainer: Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you.

Firbolg: Rainer, it was terrible.

Rainer: Oh.

Firbolg: We have murdered so many of theimps. Some were good. Others bad. No time to tell the difference.

Rainer: Oh, okay. I went and saw my dad!

Firbolg: How is your dad? My friend Carl—

Justin: [laughs] I don't actually know Rainer's dad.

Griffin: [laughing]

Justin: [laughing] I was gonna pretend like I knew who Rainer's dad was.

Rainer: My dad's dead, but he's fine!

Firbolg: How—how was that?

Rainer: Oh, it's good. It's always great to see him.

Fitzroy: Sorry, you just kind of casually slipped in there that your dad has passed away. And I'm guessing—

Rainer: Well...

Fitzroy: You didn't—hey. Rainer? Hey, Rainer?

Rainer: Uh-huh?

Fitzroy: Hey. Hey... hey, Rainer?

Rainer: Yeah?

Fitzroy: You didn't—you didn't like, squirrel-tize him, did ya?

Rainer: No, don't be silly! He's a lich!

Fitzroy: Oh, yes. That was silly of me to ask the question I asked, considering the answer that you then gave to me.

Rainer: Yeah! He's, y'know... undead maybe would be a better way to put it. He's not technically... ali—you get it.

Fitzroy: He's not not dead.

Rainer: Yes! Thank you.

Firbolg: Was he... a lich when you were... crafted?

Rainer: No. Uh... but I mean, he did teach me everything I know about necromancy, so, y'know... the—the apple doesn't fall far from the tree!

Firbolg: A late in life lich. It is so important for our seniors to follow their bliss.

Travis: [laughs]

Firbolg: And not become complacent.

Rainer: Um...

Firbolg: Life begins at death. This is what we say.

Travis: Uh, now, normally, this would be the part of the morning where you've grown used to Gary taking care of the daily announcements. But, you are surprised to say Hieronymous Wigenstaff himself stepping up on the stage and saying...

Hieronymous: I have some announcements to make. First, welcome back, students! We're so excited to begin another semester here at Hieronymous Wigenstaff's School for Heroism and Villainy!

Fitzroy: Yaaay!

Hieronymous: Yay!

Argo: Yay. [claps]

Fitzroy: Get `em—get `em, Ron!

Hieronymous: Okay. We've had many wonderful reports of your adventures over the break, and you have made us all proud. Next, uh, announcement – I would like to encourage all of you to focus on your schoolwork. It's so easy to become distracted by every little thing that comes along, but keep your nose in the books!

Fitzroy: [laughs] Yeah!

Hieronymous: Finally, I have the pleasure of introducing Althea Song to you all.

Travis: He gestures to the person sitting next to him on stage. She is a full-blooded elf with autumn orange hair. She looks out at the crowd with a raised eyebrow.

Hieronymous: Althea is a representative from the Heroic Oversight Guild. She will be joining us for a while to check in, and to make sure we are running a tight ship.

Travis: All three of you make an insight check.

Griffin: Six. Plus. It doesn't fucking matter.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Justin: 15 plus four. 19.

Clint: Eight minus one, seven.

Travis: Alright. Firbolg, you notice that, even though he is smiling, the smile is not touching his eyes, and you get the very distinct impression that he is annoyed by her presence.

Hieronymous: So, be sure to answer all her questions and help her with anything she needs. And as always, if you need me, my door is always open!

Travis: And he leaves the stage.

Fitzroy: Yeahhh!

Justin: Hey, remind me the new person's name? I'm so bad with names.

Travis: Althea Song. A-L-T-H-E-A.

Griffin: Well, I want to talk to Firbolg about like, what just happened. But I don't necessarily want to do it right now in the middle of the dining hall with God and everyone around.

Travis: Totally cool.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hi, friends! It's me, your kind and benevolent DM, Travis McElroy. I have some announcements, but first, I'll start off with the fun thing. This episode introduced a new character named Althea Song, and she is named after a young lady that I met, uh, at Pensacon, who was traveling with her family, named Althea. And she was very cute and very sweet, and she—her family asked that I name an NPC after her, and I asked her what she wanted to be, and she said she wanted to be an elf Cleric. And so, there you go! And welcome to the show, Althea!

Now, on a different note, as I'm sure you have heard, we have postponed the MaxFunDrive, which is why you've not been hearing us talk about it in this episode. It would've started Monday, but y'know, it's a stressful time for everybody, and we know that there's a lot of uncertainty going on about what the future might hold, so we didn't want to stress people out by talking

about support and how much we need the support right now, because y'know, it's scary for everybody. And we didn't want to stress anybody out.

MaxFunDrive should be a fun thing full of excitement and bonus content, and y'know, all that stuff, and it just wasn't the right time. There's too much bad stuff. But that doesn't mean there can't be good stuff, too, so we'll keep trying to put out, y'know, more fun content. That's why I put this episode up early so you have plenty of stuff to enjoy.

Also, on another announcement, we have postponed our April shows. The Twenty Funny tour, we're gonna hold off on those for a while until, y'know, after all the scary stuff is done. But hold onto your tickets, because they will be, y'know, they will be honored for the rescheduled shows, and we'll be announcing those rescheduling dates as soon as we can.

Now, enjoy the episode!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Argo, let's start with you. But first... twist! Firbolg... as you all disperse from the dining hall to head on about your day, you find yourself making your way to the office of the head of the Sidekick and Henchperson Annex, Higglemas Wigenstaff. You knock on the door. A moment passes, and then you wake up, sitting under a tree in the middle of campus. You must've fallen asleep.

Argo! So, you head to your independent studies class with Jackle, that you are slated to take this year, supposedly to perfect your rogueing skills. So, you enter Jackle's chamber. There are no other students there. And you close and lock the door behind you, and as you walk in, he stands from his desk, says...

Jackle: Ahh, welcome back, young Argo. It's good to see ya again.

Argo: Um, hello, Jackle. [whispers] Is there any kind of a secret handshake we're supposed to do? Y'know, bein' in the unbroken chain? Do we—do we do something in secret? Y'know, like a handshake or a—

Jackle: [interrupting] Have you seen the view from my balcony? Come, join me out here. Take a look.

Argo: Aye. Aye, I will.

Travis: As you step on the balcony, you pass through a, much like when you passed into the room that was hidden in the forge, a kind of shimmering curtain that you hadn't noticed before now. And as you step through, Jackle says...

Jackle: There's no Garys out here. There's no listenin'. We got some wards out here so no one can listen. Uh, so, how was your mission?

Argo: Uh, well, I mean, it was interesting. It was kind of creepy. Umm... but uh, yeah. I almost died. So, that was kind of a sucky, y'know, angle to it.

Jackle: No. Argo. Argo, I'm not talking about the imps, boy. I'm talking about, what did you learn about Fitzroy Maplecourt? What'd you learn about his family?

Argo: Oh! Oh, yeah. Yeah. Oh, listen to this. You're gonna love this. His ma, her name was Dindra. And she handed out really good gum. Had a big purse. Had a huge purse. And in this purse, she kept like, jewels and gems, and uh, amulets, and uh, hot mint gum, apparently. So... that—that's... that's about the extent of what I learned.

Jackle: [sighs]

Argo: These guys don't like talkin' about themselves. They don't want to share. [weepy] I mean, they kind of bond together, and they got their little things, and they talk, but nobody—

Jackle: Argo. Argo, stop. Calm—calm yourself.

Argo: Right. Sorry.

Jackle: It is important that you... we must understand where this boy's power comes from.

Argo: I don't think his parents had magic? And it has something to do with him bein' a barbarian, and ragin' out. 'Cause it's not like he just, y'know, can... [claps] Clap his hands together and do magic. He's gotta kind of wig out a little bit. At least, that's what it looked like to me.

Jackle: It's not uncommon for a barbarian to be able to tap into something when they feel the rage come upon them, but it's the nature. We... [sighs]

Argo: So you don't care about the gum at all? You don't think the gum is important?

Griffin: [laughs]

Argo: 'Cause I—that was kind of a big get for me. I was kind of proud of that.

Jackle: Hot mint is nothin' new, Argo. That's... that's the most common kind of gum there is in this world. You know that.

Argo: Well, no... no, I know about fish jerky, but not hot mint gum.

Jackle: Okay, when all of this is done, I'll get ya a pack, okay?

Argo: Cool.

Jackle: Now, it's the nature. The why—we've never seen magic like this before. Well, that's not entirely true. We've never seen magic like this before from a person. This kind of wild magic, it's... it's something else. And it's vital that we understand it.

Argo: Let me ask you a question. And y'know, be as honest as you can be, y'know, bein' a rogue, and y'know, named Jackle. Are you gonna use this information to hurt him?

Jackle: No. No, Argo. It's not—

Argo: Because listen... the—the guy could'a... he had a chance to help himself, or save my salty ass. And he saved my salty ass. I... I... I don't feel so comfortable spying on him, especially if it's gonna lead to something bad happenin' to him. He's not a bad guy. For an arrogant jerk, he's kind of a nice arrogant jerk.

Jackle: Argo, I promise ya. We don't have anything bad planned for Fitzroy. It's about information. It's about understanding. Argo... I'm gonna tell you something. This is a bit... this is perhaps one of the biggest pieces of information that I could share with ya from our branch of the Unbroken Chain. But I trust you. I do. And so... do you want to know why there's so many of us here at the school? Why there's a whole branch, here at the school?

Argo: Yes. That had been plaguing my thoughts, trying to figure out there was a bunch of ya.

Travis: Jackle gestures towards the Godscar Chasm. And to remind those listening at home, because they can't see it, the school, to its northern point, is bordered on one side by the Unknown Forest, and the other side by a large, uh, canyon called the Godscar Chasm. And he points toward the Godscar Chasm and says...

Jackle: About 50 years ago, Argo, we detected wild magic, bleeding out of the Godscar Chasm. We can't determine the origin. We don't know why it started, but... it's a mystery to this day. We've been studying it for 50 years.

Now, it hasn't increased. The bleed hasn't increased. It's stayed pretty steady. But we're here monitoring that. And then, here comes this boy, this Fitzroy Maplecourt, and he has the same kind of magic, and that can't... be a coincidence, Argo.

Argo: Well why can't I just come out and ask him? Why can't I, instead of just sittin' around, y'know, trying to be—

Jackle: That is not—Argo, when you joined The Unbroken Chain, you knew what you were getting into. We are a secret organization. You can't just ask him.

Argo: Okay...

Jackle: You can't raise any questions, Argo. No one must know what we do. We work. In. Secret.

Argo: I understand. Okay, let me just tell you something. That's fine. And I'll pursue this up to a point. But if it reaches the point where something bad's gonna happen to him, you may have your first broken chain link, my... my friend.

Jackle: I can—I can promise you. We don't have anything bad planned for him. It's just about information.

Argo: Alright. I'll... I'll keep workin' me magic.

Jackle: Now, we should probably do *some* rogue practice to keep up the illusion of our independent studies class. So come with me.

Travis: You step back inside, and you can see that he has laid out three chests. And now he says...

Jackle: Okay. Today we're gonna work on lock picking. Now, each one of these chests, it's gonna get harder as we go. So let's start with this one on the far left. Why don't you pick that lock for me, Argo?

Argo: Alright.

Clint: He uh, points at that one on the left, and says...

Argo: I pick that one!

Griffin: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Griffin: That's good stuff, Dad!

Justin: I liked it. I liked it.

Griffin: That's the best one yet, Dad!

Clint: Well, y'know, it's no country band, but it'll do.

Jackle: That is very funny. Now, use your thieves' tools to open that lock.

Argo: Okay.

Clint: Um... so, I'm going to use... I'm going to make a... sleight of hand roll?

Travis: Well, so, basically, the way that lock picking works in fifth edition D&D is, you roll a d20, and then you're gonna add your proficiency bonus to it. Because you are a rogue, you are proficient in your thieves' tools. Anybody can attempt to pick a lock, assuming they have the tools to justify it, but only like, a rogue and maybe a bard, depending on what their specializations are in, have proficiency.

Clint: Okay. Alright. Alright. Here's my roll. It is a three! Plus two, that's a five.

Travis: Uh, okay. Well, it didn't work. And you're going to take two damage.

Clint: Ooh.

Travis: Uh, as a needle springs from the lock and pierces into your finger, as you're trying to pick the lock.

Clint: Ouch.

Travis: And Jackle starts laughing.

Jackle: [laughs]

Argo: Remember, you can prick your finger... alright, okay. Can I try another one, please?

Jackle: Yeah, but Argo, are you even gonna ask about the trap? [laughs] You need to—okay. You kind of missed the point here, Argo. My point is, before you pick any lock, you need to look for traps. That's rule number one in lock picking.

Argo: That's why I said should I do perception or insight or something first!!

Jackle: No, what you said was sleight of hand. And so, don't try to rewrite history.

Griffin: [laughs]

Jackle: I was listening.

Argo: Alright...

Jackle: So, before you do it, I want you to look at every lock. I want you to investigate every lock.

Travis: Now, I say that – it's actually a perception check, but I don't want him to say, "I want you to roll a perception check," because that's not good DMing.

Argo: Alright. I'm gonna really... rrrgh... really lookin' at that lock. Ahh, okay...

Clint: An roll an 18... plus... why am I still talkin' in character? Plus one. 19.

Travis: Okay. So, uh, that—now you see that, actually, the lock you were trying to pick is actually a keyhole on the side of the lock that you were using. That front one is a trapped lock that will pierce anyone who is trying to unlock it. So now, why don't you roll a check on that second lock?

Clint: Alright. Here we go. That's a 17 plus...

Travis: Oh yeah, that does it.

Clint: Plus two, which is 19.

Travis: That one pops open.

Jackle: Okay, Argo. Now, the lock on the next chest is a little trickier. Why don't you try that one?

Clint: Okay. Perception check. 15... um, plus two. No, plus one. That's 16.

Travis: Very good. There is no trap on this chest, but good job looking.

Clint: Thank you. Okay, and that's a 14... plus two, 16.

Travis: That lock springs open as well.

Jackle: Okay, Argo, one last chest. This one's the hardest.

Clint: Yeah, I'm feelin' so good about this, I may just do it without tryin' the perception check. I got a little confidence going for me... I'm kidding! I make a perception check. Jeeze Louise, what a tough room. That is an 18, plus one, so that's 19.

Travis: You do not find a trap, but you also, just from perception, cannot find the lock.

Clint: Well... well... alright. How about investigation?

Travis: Okay.

Clint: Uh, that is 11, and I add three to investigation. So that's 14.

Travis: Um, as you are investigating, you find that the bottom four corner plates on the chest are loose. And you press upon them, and a plate in the front of the chest springs open, revealing the lock.

Clint: Okay. So... I better do another perception check. On the lock?

Travis: I—Dad, I want you to know that I, Travis, am so proud of you. I don't care how boring this is to anyone listening. My dad is learning how to be a careful rogue, and it's making me very proud.

Clint: 16 plus one, 17! How careful is that?

Travis: There is no trap present. Good looking out.

Justin: Thrilling.

Clint: So I lock pick the shit out of it, with a 15 plus two!

Travis: The lock springs open! Good work, Dad! You did it!

Clint: And what's inside it? What's inside the box that I get?

Travis: A cookie. There wasn't going to be anything in it, but I'm so proud of you, it's a delicious, somehow magically still warm, chocolate chip cookie.

Clint: Let me write that down... chocolate...

Travis: You're not gonna consume it?

Clint: Nooo.

Griffin: No, he's gonna throw it at the final boss, in a moment of deus ex machina.

Justin: Travis, this is ever-warm cookie of Glade Spring.

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Justin: It's worth ten thousand gold pieces!

Clint: I slip it into my rogue's case.

Travis: And we leave this scene as you and Jackle kind of jump up into the sky and thrust your fist into the air.

Justin: Wait, I want him to check a few more locks for traps!

Travis: Well, there's plenty of time left for that in the rest of Adventure Zone: Graduation.

Justin: Hey guys, just hit our Patreon. You're gonna get tons of bonus content. You're gonna get my dad checking like 30 more locks for traps.

Travis: Yeah, we got a lot. Just make sure you smash that 'like' or 'subscribe' button so you don't miss any of our updates about how many traps he checks, how many he doesn't, uh, and don't forget to follow me on Instagram for all my pictures of trapless locks!

[music plays]

Travis: Um, so next, we find... let's go with Fitzroy next.

Griffin: Hello.

Travis: [snorts] Hi, I'm Fitzroy Maplecourt!

Griffin: Hey everyone, it's me, Fitzroy Maplecourt. Welcome to my YouTube channel.

Clint: We've had a lot of fun here today, but...

Travis: So, Fitzroy, you have been worried. This scene that played out with Buckminster, uh, on your last day of break has kind of stuck with you. And as you have said, it has made you quite paranoid. You've found yourself kind of checking your shoulder. And at this point, you're pretty sure that there is lots of kind of mind-altering shenanigans going on here at the school.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: So what have you been planning? What have you been thinking about?

Griffin: Uh, yeah. I think he... here's where I think he's at. Um, because like, the... swashbuckling, like, heroic thing is like, start building a coalition, and of truth seekers, Dumbledore's army to figure out... but like, I just want—man, I just want to fucking graduate and move to Goodcastle where I can be a knight.

And so, part of me is just like, I don't wanna—whatever this is, it's big, and I don't want to fuck with it. But I also do not think I'm gonna make it across the finish line here, with everything that's going on, and I do not know who to—how to even begin tackling it, because anybody could be involved in it.

It's not just—it's not just, uh, uh, Buckminster, right? It's the—that ploy at the end of the imp hospital mission. Like, there's a lot of stuff going on. So I think first thing's first, like, he wants to figure out a way to protect his own brain. But I didn't want to do the Harry Potter whatever it is. Occlumency series. So, uh, I am going to try and learn how to make magic items to try and find some way to protect myself.

Travis: Okay, excellent! So, you are heading back from class to—you have a solid two hour break, so you're heading towards the main building, where you know that the artificery lab is. And as you're going, you see the Firbolg, uh, waking up underneath a tree.

Griffin: Uh, I'll pop in.

Travis: Firbolg, you see Fitzroy as well.

Griffin: I wave.

Fitzroy: Hey, roomie.

Firbolg: I... where... the—what happened?

Fitzroy: Uh, you were napping under a tree. And then, you woke up, and then I'm here, and I said, "Hey, roomie!" And waved.

Firbolg: I... do not recall... [sighs] Coming here.

Fitzroy: Wow. Uh... did you have a late night las—wait, I saw you this morning. So like, when did you decide to take a nap here?

Firbolg: Fitzroy... may we talk?

Fitzroy: Um... this is... this might not be the best time or place.

Firbolg: Of course.

Griffin: I tap the side of my nose.

Fitzroy: Hm? Hm? Hm?

Firbolg: Uh...

Fitzroy: But a discussion... should take place... hm? Hm?

Firbolg: In your nose... ?

Clint: [laughs]

Fitzroy: Um... you'll know the time and place. Hm?

Clint: [laughing]

Firbolg: This is all a great mystery.

Fitzroy: Yes, isn't it? I would love to get into it right now with you, Master Firbolg, but... I cannot promise... that we will be safe. So...

Firbolg: Ah.

Fitzroy: Until next time. Hm?

Clint: [laughs]

Firbolg: What if there was... a place in the forest?

Fitzroy: Yeah, I mean, if you could scout out a place in the forest for us to have a clandestine conversation, that would be pretty great.

Firbolg: I will investigate, and I will send word.

Fitzroy: And just to be safe—just to be safe... hold on. Oh yeah, the library! That's a great place to meet, Master Firbolg.

Firbolg: Do you think... the library? It seems there would be many too watching.

Fitzroy: See, I was starting to get excited over breakfast, because I thought we might be forming a sort of like, unspoken connection, like we

could sort of pass messages back and forth without necessarily having to speak them out loud.

Firbolg: Yes. Yes.

Fitzroy: But I guess we're not necessarily on that wavelength. That's not to say we won't get there. But just find a place in the forest for us to talk, and we'll talk.

Firbolg: I will do this.

Fitzroy: Great. Great. I'll see you soon.

Travis: Uh, so, Fitzroy, you continue on your way to the artificing lab. You enter, and you are greeted by Crabtree, the artificer. Her long, gray hair is tied back in a well-manicured braid, as is her beautiful, long, gray beard.

Griffin: Uh, is... is this the first day of class?

Travis: Uh, well, there is no class going on. She, uh, normally—

Griffin: Oh!

Travis: You do not take artificing until your second year of school. So she is surprised to see you, and she says...

Crabtree: Uh, can I help you? Are you... is there... what's goin' on?

Fitzroy: Uh, hello! Uh, Crabtree. My name is Sir Fitzroy Maplecourt. I'm a knight in absentia for the realm of Goodcastle, and I uh, was recently escalated to the villain track here.

Crabtree: Oh, yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah. Right right right. Yes.

Fitzroy: It's very exciting, and I am so proud to be a part of this institution. Uhh... y'know, I bleed... blue... what the colo—hey, what's our school colors?

Crabtree: That's up to the merch people to decide.

Griffin: [laughs] Okay.

Fitzroy: Uh, so yes.

Crabtree: Green and gold, uh, purple and black, something like that probably.

Fitzroy: That all sounds great. Um... I was wondering... if I could take, sort of as an elective, a... an impromptu sort of crafting... lesson.

Crabtree: Oh! Huh. Well, normally, the...

Travis: It's so hard for me, 'cause like, my default voice is to just kind of give everybody a little bit of a country accent.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: Thanks, West Virginia.

Crabtree: Well, I suppose you could, but you don't normally take the class—the artificing until second year.

Fitzroy: Oh, yes, I'm aware of that. Um, but... y'know, I... may I be honest, Crabtree?

Crabtree: Sure.

Fitzroy: I possess the soul of an artist. So I don't know if you can tell that just looking at me.

Crabtree: Okay?

Fitzroy: And I've tried a few different sort of disciplines. Um, painting. Sculpting. Uhh... uhh, I did the thing where you decorate the flowers. You like, arrange the—like, flower arranging.

Crabtree: Uh-huh.

Fitzroy: None of them have—

Crabtree: Florist. Floristry.

Fitzroy: Yes. None of it has provided sucre to my soul. And so, I continue to look for a discipline that will give me that sucre, so I... I think... that it all is going to hinge on artificing. It's the only thing I haven't tried yet. I watched some cool videos about it, and it seems fun. It seems like I can do it. But y'know what? I tried to do it in my dorm room? Hurt my fingers. So... I would love to learn from an accomplished master like yourself, Crabtree.

Crabtree: Oh, well... thank you very much. Is there... something in particular you're hoping to craft?

Fitzroy: Uhh... mmm... I guess it's just where the art leads me. The muse. Who can say? Who can say what they're going to craft when they sit down at the crafting bench, you know?

Crabtree: I'll be honest with you, I don't have time to teach you everything about the crafting of artificing. I... I could guide you through like, one project, if you could kind of teach yourself the basics.

Fitzroy: Oh, yeah, that sounds great. Let's do just that, and y'know, I'll take it from there. Anything I can glean from you, I... oh, is worth more than money can buy.

Crabtree: Oh, okay. Well, I do just need a little bit of guidance to understand what you want to craft, so I know what materials to order, and what kind of stuff you need.

Fitzroy: Oh, just whatever you've got layin' around I'm sure will be fine.

Crabtree: Oh, okay. Well, we could make, um... let's see, we could make like a glowing item, to help you see in the dark?

Fitzroy: Ohh, cool! No. But not that, though.

Crabtree: O-okay. Uhh...

Fitzroy: Let's try something fun, where I can make something without you... and you don't know what it is!

Justin: [laughs]

Crabtree: That... hm. That doesn't really work.

Fitzroy: You can just sort of give me broad—maybe you can teach me how to make ten different things, and I'll randomly pick one of them, and you won't know which one.

Crabtree: Well, it really kind of depends on what materials you need.

Griffin: How much do I—let me roll to see how much I actually know about artificing, if you don't mind.

Travis: Okay. Yeah, go for it.

Griffin: What is—

Travis: Uh...

Griffin: [whispering] Don't say intelligence. Don't say intelligence. Don't say intelligence. Don't say intelligence.

Travis: Give me a wisdom check.

Griffin: Oh! That's an 18. Uhh, if it's intelligence, it's a 17. If it's wisdom, that's 18.

Travis: Either way, you understand the principles of it. You've never, uh, like, really done it before, as far as like, made a whole thing.

Griffin: Explain to me, Griffin, what the principles are. 'Cause like, are we talking about sort of the general, like, uh, y'know, how enchanting works in Skyrim? Or is it literally like, you have to... we're talking about like, the creation of magic items, right? Is it more—

Travis: Correct.

Griffin: Is this discipline more about the imbuing items with magic, or is it about the actual, like, forging, crafting of them?

Travis: It is the creating of an item that has the ability to be imbued with the spell. So you have to make an item that is compatible. You couldn't just take any ring and slap like, y'know, frost resistance onto it, right? You would have to craft it in such a way that the materials included the mixing of—y'know, the making of the alloy, basically, would make it suitable for that.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: So, if you are wanting to create something that you would be able to put, like, a resistance to, basically, enchantment, you're going—that one's a pretty tricky one.

Griffin: Right. I think less enchantment, and more like, specifically, like, dominate person. Like, an anti-spell to whatever, like, dominate person, charm... I mean, that's the thing. Like, I know, broad strokes, what's going on with Buckminster, but not enough to know like, I think, how to combat it. So I'm kind of—I'm kind of flying blind a little bit.

Fitzroy: Um... some sort of—let's start here. How about, if I wanted to create some sort of protective ward, um, that would protect my... head...

Crabtree: Okay?

Fitzroy: And the organs inside of it. From... external... control.

Crabtree: Oh!

Fitzroy: And that's just one of like—y'know what, forget it. That's just a rand—how random. I'm being random.

Crabtree: So you're talking about something that would protect your mental faculties.

Fitzroy: Just as one example. Like, there's also like, a laser... bracelet. Would be cool.

Crabtree: Oh, we could make a laser bracelet.

Fitzroy: Nah, let's do the first one. Actually, I'm thinking about it. But I don't really care. It could be either of them, but let's do the first one.

Crabtree: Well, I think that that is an ambitious project, and uh, I sure would be happy, uh, to kind of coach you through that. I will say... the issue is, that's one of them where the materials are a little bit more pricey than what we normally do. That's not a problem, so much as... we are gonna need kind of some higher up permission for that, in order to use those.

Fitzroy: How much we—how much we talkin'?

Crabtree: Well, it's not about money. It's about permission. 'Cause that's usually not something that we let even our first or second or third year. That's usually like... we're talkin' about, y'know, gold and jewels and stuff. That's usually like a fourth and fifth year kind of budget.

Fitzroy: Sure. But... Crabtree. I think we both know... it's aalways about the money. Isn't it? So, how much money?

Crabtree: Well, I'll tell you what. Here's what it is. You get me a signed note from either of the Wigenstuffs, and we'll call it even. I just—I don't want to lose my job over this, y'know?

Fitzroy: Oh, gosh, yes. It's, um... yes. Absolutely. Yeah. Well... yep. That should be easy to get. Any—just, hypothetically, is there literally... any other way that I can convince you to do this for me? Literally any other way.

Crabtree: I mean, like I said, we could make, y'know, like a headband that lights up, or y'know, something that, I don't know, makes it a little easier for you to cool down drinks? Something like that. That's fairly cheap to make.

Fitzroy: Can you... I will work on that. But it will be easier for me to get permission if I know exactly what it is that I am looking for. So would you mind writing down a list of exactly the sort of regents that I may need, uh, to craft this item?

Crabtree: Absolutely.

Fitzroy: Okay.

Griffin: Uh, I take that list, and I say...

Fitzroy: Okay! Well, I will... work on it! Say, I mean, I don't want to insult your discipline. It seems like it is quite difficult. Do you think that, once I acquire these things, I will be able to make such an item?

Crabtree: Oh, I wouldn't try it. When you're dealing with things having to do with your mental faculties, anything like that backfires, and... you might not recover from it.

Fitzroy: M'kay. Well, I appreciate your time. I will be back soon, hopefully with a signed... permission slip... from uh, one of the Wigenstuffs. So, that should be great, and I look forward to that.

Griffin: What is the... give me a sense of like, what she—what she wrote down. Like, what kind of stuff we're talking about.

Travis: Uh, mostly it's some pretty precious metals. There's uh—it's kind of a platinum-based alloy. But it does require certain jewels to kind of be encrusted—basically what you're looking at is like a design. The design is like a three-pronged, uh, thing that would sit on your head. So it would be like, y'know, kind of a circlet, but then, an additional piece that goes over the top of the head. And at the end of each of those is a jewel.

Griffin: Okay.

Travis: So, not a cheap piece to make.

Griffin: Alright. I was trying to think if there was any way I could argue that Fitzroy would have these things, but it sounds like that is fairly...

Travis: No.

Griffin: Yeah.

Travis: And like she said, when it comes to artificing, the reason that this is not—what makes it very different from blacksmithing is that, with blacksmithing, y'know, you're worried about durability, right? You're dealing with things like, will the shield take the damage? Will the sword break on impact? Will your armor be able to withstand the attack? That kind of thing, right?

With artificing, it's much more about precision. Because if you get the mixtures wrong, if the gems are not cut right, anything like that, not only is it possible the thing will not work...

Griffin: It could blow up my brain.

Travis: Exactly.

Griffin: Yeah, okay. That's fine.

Travis: So this is—artificing is not an area where you want to cut corners.

Griffin: Absolutely. Okay. I was trying to think, in the moment, I almost like, cast *Prestidigitation* to like, make a fake signature on a thing. And then I realized, like, oh, that could break so fuckin' bad, and I'm not good at magic, so let's not do that.

Travis: Now, I will say, because I am a kind and benevolent GM, and it's been a while since we spoke with them... you have met another talented artificer here at the school. You met Mimi the gnome, when you were doing the game of dodge ball. So you do know another talented artificer.

Griffin: Mmm... I gotta stay true to—like, if I, Griffin, didn't remember that, like, I don't think that—

Travis: Okay!

Griffin: Yeah, and y'know what? Even if like—she's a student, right?

Travis: Yes.

Griffin: So like, if what I just learned is true, and I could blow up my own mind... Travis, I don't know if you know this, but it's not really a place where you want to cut corners. I want to fuck with the best, so I'm gonna get this signature somehow.

Travis: Um, okay. So, we cut to, uh, the Firbolg. I assume you are now exploring, looking for a safe place to talk.

Justin: Yeah. Did I find one?

Travis: [laughs] Well, maybe paint me a little picture first, and I could tell you. Where did you go?

Justin: Alright, I look at one tree, and then I look at another tree, and I just keep lookin' at 'em 'til I find a good spot.

Travis: Are you actually venturing into the Unknown Forest?

Justin: I mean, not too deep. Just like a little bit. Just kind of duckin' in there. To get out of the view of Garies.

Travis: When you enter the Unknown Forest, there is definitely a magical darkness. So as you enter, the light doesn't seem to pierce very far. Even though it's midday, um, there's not a lot of light piercing from the world outside the trees. So you do get the very distinct impression that this was maybe a world separate unto itself in some way.

Sort of like if you crossed below the surface of a lake, right? You suddenly—the sound would not travel the same, the light would not travel the same. And if you look into the surface of the water, it would actually—the light would be diffracted in such a way that you would not get a clear picture of the thing beneath. That is the quality of the Unknown Forest. Difficult to perceive, hence the name.

Justin: So this seems good here?

Travis: Yeah, you don't have to go very far to—

Justin: Good.

Travis: That said, anytime you step foot in the Unknown Forest, there is danger.

Justin: Well, let the wiki show, your honor, I ain't scared.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: [laughs]

Clint: [laughs]

Travis: Duly noted.

Justin: Just for posterity's sake. And then I... I guess I text.

Travis: You do have the—you have the books of Farspeech.

Justin: Yes, the books of Farspeech. I will send a message with my approximate GPS data.

Travis: And what do you do there, Fitzroy, now that you are done speaking with Crabtree?

Griffin: Uh, I... I wanna—I guess I start making my way there. I... I think about... uhh... I think about like, trying to get Argo in on this? But there is a part of me that watched him leave the room a lot while I was asleep, like, through my trance sleeping, and there—I think that there is just like, still enough, um, uhh, like... there's still enough uncertainty there that I do not know if he would bring him into the fold. Like, hence the secretive nature of this.

Travis: Yeah. I think that that tracks.

Griffin: So yeah, I go to meet him.

Travis: You are uh, able to follow the Firbolg's very literal directions, that has to do a lot with like, take three steps, step one to the right, see a tree, look to the left of that tree... like, that kind of thing. They're very precise, and maybe a little too precise, to the point of like, yeah, I see you. I don't—okay.

And you step foot past the kind of boundary of the Unknown Forest. As you do, I'm gonna say that it—the kind of cold and darkness maybe hits you a little harder, Fitzroy. It's not really a world you're as comfortable in as the Firbolg. Definitely, when you enter, it just sends a chill up your spine. And maybe it's all placebo. Maybe it's just in your mind. It's that feeling of when you enter an abandoned building, and you just feel like, "I'm not supposed to be here."

Griffin: Uh, I pull my cloak a little tighter. But I—I am—let the wiki show, I am scared, but I'm gonna keep on going anyway.

Travis: Well, that's real bravery, as far as I'm concerned.

Griffin: Sure.

Firbolg: Mmm. Thank you for coming.

Fitzroy: Uh, thank you for finding such a very spooky location for us to have our rendezvous. How are you... feeling right now?

Firbolg: It... I am afraid.

Fitzroy: I can understand that.

Firbolg: Not because of the forest.

Fitzroy: Oh, okay. That's...

Firbolg: I am not scared of the forest, let the record show.

Fitzroy: Um...

Firbolg: I... [sighs] [pause] I... ah... have... been doing things that I do not... remember. I do things for reasons that I cannot... recall. I... am not... [sighs] In control. I am afraid, Fitzroy.

Fitzroy: Yes, I'm... I am quite afraid of that, too. There... ah...

Firbolg: You may have questions that regard to the specifics of the situation I am referring to.

Griffin: I'm trying to remember... I look around for Garies. I look—

Justin: Gary check!

Griffin: Gary check. Are there any Garies out here? Did we buy the pocket Gary?

Travis: Uh, I mean, you did, but you tell me. Do you have Pocket Gary with you?

Griffin: Who bought the Pocket Gary?

Travis: I believe it was the Firbolg.

Justin: There's no fucking way I brought Pocket Gary with me. Come on.

Travis: There you go.

Griffin: Okay. That was me trying to—I'm trying to think of every way that Travis could fuck us on this. But I think we're good. Um, I say...

Fitzroy: I... I know... of what you speak. And... I am afraid as well. But before I can say another word... master Firbolg, I have to make sure that we are the only two people listening. Do... I know... I—we have known each other for a bit now, and I do not know what you think of me. And so, before we go any further, I need to know if you trust me.

Firbolg: You are my CEO.

Clint: [laughs]

Firbolg: There is no stronger bond. At least... [sighs] There is not for me, now.

Fitzroy: Okay.

Griffin: Um, I wanna use my... my like, organic detect magic stuff to see if I pick up the same sort of signature on him as I did on Buckminster.

Travis: Go for it.

Griffin: I don't think I—I do not think I roll on that.

Travis: Okay.

Griffin: Let me double check. It's weird, because my—my uh, the reason we keep checking this is, my...

Travis: It's different, right? 'Cause yours is more specific.

Griffin: It's different. Right. Yeah. It's a different thing, so I need to make sure. Um... yeah, I don't roll, and I'm checking—yeah. I have to pick a school of magic, so I'm just checking for the same sort of enchantment.

Travis: Um, it—you do detect the same, uh, school of magic, the same level of enchantment. Roll a perception check for me?

Griffin: Uh, that is a 12 plus two. 14.

Travis: Um, and you are pretty sure it is exactly the same. That it is not just the same, um, school, but that it has a very similar, like... if you're seeing the color, right? That it has almost the same tone you remember.

Griffin: Okay. Then I put my hand on his shoulder, and I cast *Charm Person* on him.

Travis: Okay.

[tense music plays]

Griffin: And I don't know like... when you cast *Charm Person* on somebody, they must make a wisdom saving throw, and do so with advantage if you or your companions are fighting it. Uhh... and I don't know like, what the rule—like, if somebody can like—

Travis: I mean, it depends on if he is going to resist it or not. But he is—

Justin: I think I wouldn't, because we just now established that I trust him.

Travis: Yep. I agree.

Griffin: I am looking for... a conflict. Like, I am looking for... you can't charm a charmed person, right? Like, you can't mind control a mind controlled person. This is—that is literally what I am trying to do here. I am trying to, I guess, battle some sort of, uh, y'know, domination on him with my own.

Travis: Um, so, you are able to charm him. But... it feels... wrong, in a way. The best metaphor I can give you is, imagine putting a record on, and you put the needle to it, and the music does play. You are able to play the music. But you can tell that there has been some kind of damage to the record, albeit minor, that makes it not play quite right.

So you are able to cast *Charm Person*, but it feels like there has maybe been... uh, been some other forces at work in the recent past on his psyche.

Griffin: Can I... I don't know what—we're in a weird sort of psychic battlefield here, where we are also pretty far from the rules of D&D.

Travis: Yep.

Griffin: Is there any way that I can try and probe a little deeper to figure out the nature of the spell that was there already?

Travis: I think it depends—y'know what, here's what I'm gonna say, Griffin, to answer that question. I don't know that you have any other... unless you have specific spells at your disposal, I don't know that you have the toolset to probe deeper.

Griffin: Okay, cool. I mean, that's—that makes sense. Just wanted to ask that. That's kind of why I'm doing the other—the other thing with the crafting.

[tense music fades]

Griffin: Okay, yeah, I break concentration and break the spell, and uh... ask—

Justin: Is the spell broken on his charm spell, or he broke the spell—

Travis: On the charm spell. The charm spell is broken.

Griffin: Yeah, the one I did to you. Yeah.

Justin: His charm spell. Okay.

Travis: So, to put it in more concrete terms, right? Because Fitzroy was able to cast this, it's clear that there is no ongoing spell on you.

Griffin: That's what I was checking, right? I didn't want—I didn't want the warlock's unseeing eye inside of your fuckin' brain, like, constantly beaming everything back to home base, and now I've confirmed that that's not happening.

Travis: No. This is more like somebody surgically removed something.

Griffin: Yeah.

Fitzroy: Okay, so, good news, bad news. Good news, there's no warlock's unseeing eye inside your brain beaming everything back to home base. So like, you're good right now.

Firbolg: Excellent.

Fitzroy: So nothing—yes, great! Let's celebrate that. Small victories. Because the bad news is, there's definitely someone up in your... brain.

Firbolg: Mm.

Fitzroy: But... the worst news is, I have no earthly idea how they're doing it. So... I should've mentioned there was worse news. Decent news – so this is kind of average news. And I know there's a lot of news. I am working on a way to protect you and I, and whoever else joins our merry band of freedom fighters, or whatever, uh, from outside influence. So that is a good thing, yes?

Uh, awful news... I do need the help of the two deans of this university. Um, to get that done. And I think that's all the news. So do you have any news for me?

Firbolg: Mm... I have only... gaps. Missing pieces. I know... do you remember that I grab the... mercury in the hospital?

Fitzroy: Uh, yes.

Firbolg: I do not know why.

Justin: And Travis, am I safe in assuming that it's gone?

Travis: Correct.

Firbolg: And I do not know where it is. To not be in control of myself... is... uncomfortable.

Fitzroy: I am also very afraid of that, master Firbolg. Because I know... I know what you are capable of, and I do not want that in the hands of someone who would use it for ill good, or bad, as some people call it.

Firbolg: Hm.

Fitzroy: I... I don't know—

Firbolg: Can I help... with your project?

Fitzroy: Uh, do you have like, a wicked lot of platinum and precious gemstones and stuff?

Firbolg: I have something much more precious.

Fitzroy: Wh—yes?

Firbolg: Patience.

Fitzroy: Nope. That's not... that doesn't...

Firbolg: All the jewels in the world will not buy patience.

Fitzroy: Let me ask you a question, Firbolg friend.

Clint: [laughing]

Firbolg: Ah.

Fitzroy: I need... through um, what will most likely end up being a criminal act... to either obtain some signatures, or just some straight up gold and jewels and stuff. And... of all of the people that we cohabitate with... I think we know who's the best to get something like that done.

But I don't know how much you've been paying attention – Argo sneaks out at night very frequently. He does not talk very much about the classes he takes. I know he is a rogue by nature, and so, there is a certain amount of that to be expected from him, but... I... there is something very big and strange happening, and there is also something strange happening with our friend, Argo Keene. I don't know if we can bring him in on this.

Firbolg: Hmm... well... you... charmed... me. Perhaps... you must charm him as well.

Fitzroy: [sighs] I don't know if he's doing whatever he's doing under the influence of some sort of magical domination.

Firbolg: Well, you solved this with me. You know that I am... ah... not to be fully trusted, eh?

[music plays]

Fitzroy: Master Firbolg, I trust you with my life. It's what... it's what happens to you occasionally that I don't trust. I don't know that I can say the same for Argo. And I don't necessarily know how to get there, so I think... at least for right now, it would behoove us to stay quiet, at least until we can protect ourselves from whatever is doing this to students at this school.

Firbolg: Hm. This is your... decision.

Fitzroy: It is.

Firbolg: Truth is the honor of the tribe.

Travis: You all have had a fairly busy day, accomplishing your various tasks, and you all three make your way back from different locations, and with different purposes, towards your dorm. As you approach the door, you realize you are all pretty much getting there at the same time. And the outside Gary, the Gary that is at the front of every building, says...

Gary: Oh, yeah, good to see you guys! Before I forget – oh, I'm Downstairs Gary. Hi.

Fitzroy: Hi, Downstairs Gary.

Gary: Uh, I have a message for you from Crush, the battlegrounds teacher for villains and heroes. Uh, congratulations, by the way. I haven't said that to you yet, on your ascension.

Uh, Crush said, uh, he heard about your fights with the imps, and he said that he heard that two of you almost died? So, it seems like you guys are gonna need to start your battlegrounds training in earnest, uh, starting

tomorrow. But he said rest up, get a good night's sleep, get everything ready, 'cause tomorrow, time for fighting.

Fitzroy: Is it—is—um... like, fighting with our hands, fighting?

Gary: I mean, yeah. And swords, and magic, and knives and stuff.

Fitzroy: Uh, Downstairs Gary, I do need you to tell me right now if there will be skeletons involved in this battle.

Gary: I mean, there's always a possibility. You know we got skeletons that work here, right?

Fitzroy: [loudly] If you don't tell me there's skeletons, it's entrapment!

Gary: There will probably be skeletons.

Fitzroy: Okay. Well, I'm not gonna sleep tonight, so... y'all wanna watch a movie?

Argo: [bursts into laughter] One seed to grow a birch tree!!

Griffin: [bursts into laughter]

Firbolg: He has gotten it!! [laughs]

Travis: And you all make your way, laughing, up the dormitory steps. You reach your room, you unlock the door, and you enter. Uh, and upon entering, you realize that you have a guest. There is someone sitting at your dining table. It is the red haired elf woman, Althea Song. And she looks up and says...

Althea: Ah. I'm so glad you three have returned. Please, sit. I have... so many questions.

[theme music plays]